



February 18, 2025

**House Bill 1016 – Economic Development – Baltimore Convention and Tourism  
Redevelopment and Operating Authority – Established**

Committee: Ways and Means

Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) Position: **Support**

The Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) wholeheartedly supports HB1016 and the creation of the Baltimore Convention and Tourism Redevelopment and Operating Authority.

MANTS has a very long-term relationship with Baltimore City and partners, including the Baltimore Convention Center, dozens of hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions. We are North America's largest professional horticultural trade show and held our 54<sup>th</sup> annual event at the Baltimore Convention Center last month. This event was MANTS 44<sup>th</sup> consecutive annual show in Baltimore.

From humble beginnings in 1971, with just 61 exhibiting companies and a few hundred attendees, MANTS has grown to host more than 920 companies and welcomes more than 11,000 exhibitors and attendees to Baltimore annually. In 2024, MANTS had an estimated economic impact of \$5.14 million, drawing 11,255 attendees and generating \$4.05 million in visitor spending. The event also contributed \$350,466 in state taxes, \$150,685 in local taxes, and \$20,112 in tourism district taxes, reinforcing its financial significance to the city.

From 2016 to 2024, MANTS has consistently played a vital role in Baltimore's economy, bringing in over \$35.76 million in total economic impact and \$22.5 million in visitor spending. Over this period, the show has attracted 86,334 attendees and generated more than \$3.15 million in combined state and local tax revenue. These figures underscore MANTS' continued importance in supporting local businesses, the hospitality industry, and city revenues.

The trade show is sponsored by professional nursery and landscape associations in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia and for its first 10 years, rotated production of its events amongst these three states. MANTS quickly outgrew the convention venues within this tri-state area, and when the BCC opened in 1980, MANTS made the BCC its home, hosting its first show in Baltimore in January 1981.

The BCC is still the only venue in this tri-state area with capacity to host MANTS, hence its success and viability is of critical importance to the thousands of exhibitors and attendees that annually flock to Baltimore to conduct business, stay in hotels, and spend their dollars in Baltimore's restaurants and tourist attractions. The success and viability of the BCC is critical to Baltimore so that city-wide events such as MANTS can continue to come and earnestly want to come to Baltimore.

At this point in time, there is issue and question with the Baltimore Convention Center and its ability to provide a safe and reliable meeting and convention venue. Failing, aging, and decrepit infrastructure is a real and present threat to the viability of business and is a significant detractor to the ambiance of the physical building. MANTS exhibitors and attendees have, for quite a few years, endured leaky ceilings dripping street water into booths, coped with floods from burst pipes, managed work-arounds with faulty electrical boxes, and tolerated antiquated restroom facilities.

The MANTS board wishes to continue to hold MANTS in Baltimore because it is the only venue within its partnering organization states that is large enough to host us ( MANTS could in fact support larger space, with a wait list of 150 companies); Baltimore is an affordable destination; and is easy to get to from any point in the country, and most of the world. As a native Baltimorean (County), I am proud of our City and want my event to be able to continue to be held in Baltimore.

There are many fantastic options to choose over Baltimore as a meeting site, and it does not take a lot of effort for a meeting planner to find one. It is my hope and expectation that with the creation of an Authority empowered to effect change, that the infrastructure challenges that have lain dormant within the BCC will be tackled before the venue's ultimate and certain failure. If the BCC fails to flourish and draw business, the trickle down impact on Baltimore's citizens and economy would be devastating.

For over 40 years, MANTS has proudly called Baltimore home, bringing thousands of industry professionals and millions in economic impact to the city each year. We want to continue that tradition, but the Baltimore Convention Center's aging infrastructure threatens the future of our event and the many businesses that rely on it. Our exhibitors and attendees deserve a safe, reliable, and modern facility—one that matches the professionalism and excellence of the service we receive from the BCC staff and the businesses occupied by our attendees.

House Bill 1016 is a critical step toward securing that future. The creation of an Authority dedicated to the redevelopment and sustainability of the BCC gives us confidence that real, meaningful improvements can be made. We strongly urge the General Assembly to support this legislation and ensure that Baltimore remains a top destination for events like MANTS for years to come.

Sincerely,



Vanessa Finney  
Executive Vice President  
MANTS